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SUBJECT: URI SAGUY ON NEED FOR U.S. LEADERSHIP IN THE
ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN TRACK, AND FOR ISRAELI ENGAGEMENT WITH
SYRIA

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

No Israel-PA Progress Without U.S. Leadership

1. (C) Retired IDF intelligence chief MG (ret) Uri Saguy told the Ambassador February 2 that Israel needs active U.S. involvement "desperately" to move forward with the Palestinians after disengagement because the Israeli political system is "stuck," and the current coalition is heading toward a "deadlock." While he was not optimistic that Israel and the PA could bridge the vast gap between them any time soon, he stressed that the two parties, led by the United States, must nevertheless work to narrow their differences. As the parties will not make progress on their own, he contended, the U.S. must "dictate" its views.

2. (C) Saguy said he believed that most Israelis would welcome U.S. statements giving greater depth to the U.S. vision of a final status agreement. Israeli prime ministers, he said, pay great deference to U.S. views, especially when forcefully delivered. Ordinary Israelis, for their part, would accept U.S. advocacy of final status arrangements, e.g., along the lines of the Clinton parameters, because "most reasonable people" are looking for a solution to the conflict with the Palestinians that would allow them to lead normal lives. Saguy cautioned, however, that he was not confident about his ability to read Israeli public opinion. As a seventh-generation native of the land, he said that he is now part of a "minority, WASP" class that is no longer influential in Israeli political life. He said his pragmatic views do not resonate with many fellow Israelis, such as settlers, who "get very emotional about national rights." To make such Israelis "rational," the "polite" outside influence of the United States is necessary.

Dealing with Syria: "Hatred is not a policy"

3. (C) While allowing that he does not like the Syrian regime and that Syria must "pay a penalty" for its recent behavior, Saguy said that no good is served by driving the SARG "into a corner." Peace for Israel ultimately requires resolving all territorial disputes with the Arab world. Israel's long-term interests thus require it to seek ways to build towards good relations with Syria, even though the GOI has no impetus to negotiate with Syria now. "Hatred is no policy," he said. An Israeli dialogue with Syria could serve to "enlighten" the SARG, and to get it to use whatever influence it has on Iran to improve Iranian behavior.

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KURTZER